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ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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MR. SCARBOROUGH'S FAMILY.

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CHAPTER XX. MR. GREY'S OPINION OF THE SCARBOROUGH FAMILY.

HAD Augustus been really anxious to see Mr. Grey before Mr. Grey went to his father, he would probably have managed to do so. He did not always tell Mr. Jones everything. "So the fellow has hurried up to the governor the moment he came into the house," he said.

"He's with him now."

"Of course he is. Never mind. I'll be even with him in the long run." Then he greeted the lawyer with a mock courtesy as soon as he saw him. "I hope your journey has done you no harm, Mr. Grey."

"Not in the least."

"It's very kind of you, I am sure, to look after our poor concerns with so much interest. Jones, don't you think it is time they gave us some dinner? Mr. Grey, I'm sure must want his dinner."

"All in good time," said the lawyer.

"You shall have your dinner, Mr. Grey. It is the least we can do for you." Mr. Grey felt that in every sound of his voice there was an insult, and took special notice of every tone and booked them all down in his memory. After dinner he asked some unimportant question with reference to the meeting that was to take place in the morning, and was at once rebuked. "I do not know that we need trouble our friend here with our private concerns," he said.

"Not in the least," said Mr. Grey. "You have already been talking about them in my presence and in his. It is necessary that I should have a list of the creditors before I can advise your father."

"I don't see it; but, however, that is for you to judge. Indeed, I do not know on what points my father wants your advice. A lawyer generally furnishes such a list." Then Mr. Grey took up a book, and was soon left alone by the younger men.

In the morning he walked out in the park, so as to have free time for thought. Not a word further had been said between him and Augustus touching their affairs. At breakfast Augustus discussed with his friend the state of the odds respecting some race, and then the characters of certain ladies. No subjects could have been less interesting to Mr. Grey, as Augustus was aware. They breakfasted at ten, and twelve had been named for the meeting. Mr. Grey had an hour or an hour and a half for his walk, in which he could again turn over in his mind all these matters of which his thoughts had been full for now many a day.

Of two or three facts he was certain. Augustus was the legitimate heir of his father. Of that he had seen ample documentary evidence. The word of no Scarborough should go for anything with him—but of that fact he was assured. Whether the squire knew aught of Mountjoy he did not feel sure, but that Augustus did he was quite certain. Who was paying the bills for the scapegrace during his travels he could not say, but he thought it probable that Augustus was finding the money. He, Mountjoy, was kept away so as to be out of the creditors' way. He thought therefore that Augustus was doing this, so that he might the more easily buy up the debts. But why should Augustus go to the expense of buying up the debts, seeing that the money must ultimately come out of his own pocket? Because—so Mr. Grey thought—Augustus would

not trust his own father. The creditors, if they could get hold of Mountjoy when his father was dead and when the bonds would all become payable, might possibly so unravel the facts as to make it apparent that after all the property was Mountjoy's. This was not Mr. Grey's idea, but was Mr. Grey's idea of the calculation which Augustus was making for his own government. According to Mr. Grey's reading of all the facts of the case, such were the suspicions which Augustus entertained in the matter. Otherwise, why should he be anxious to take a step which would redound only to the advantage of the creditors? He was quite certain that no money would be paid, at any rate by Augustus, solely with the view of honestly settling their claims.

But there was another subject which troubled his mind excessively as he walked across the park. Why should he soil his hands, or, at any rate, trouble his conscience with an affair so unclean, so perplexed, and so troublesome? Why was he there at Tretton at all to be insulted by a young blackguard such as he believed Augustus Scarborough to be? Augustus Scarborough, he knew, suspected him. Mountjoy suspected him. The squire did not suspect him, but he suspected the squire. He never could again feel himself to be on comfortable terms of trusting legal friendship with a man who had played such a prank in reference to his marriage as this man had performed. Why, then, should he still be concerned in a matter so distasteful to him? Why should he not wipe his hands of it all and retreat? There was no Act of Parliament compelling him to meddle with this dirt.

Such were his thoughts. But yet he knew that he was compelled. He did feel himself bound to look after interests which he had taken in hand now for many years. It had been his duty—or the duty of some one belonging to him—to see into the deceit by which an attempt had been made to rob Augustus Scarborough of his patrimony. It had been his duty, for a while, to protect Mountjoy, and the creditors who had lent their money to Mountjoy, from what he had believed to be a flagitious attempt. Then, as soon as he felt that the flagitious attempt had been made previously, in Mountjoy's favour, it became his duty to protect Augustus, in spite of the strong personal dislike which from

the first he had conceived for that young man.

And then he, doubtless, had been attracted by the singularity of all that had been done in the affair, and of all that was likely to be done. He had said to himself that the matter should be made straight, and that he would make it straight. Therefore, during his walk in the park, he resolved that he must persevere.

At twelve o'clock he was ready to be taken up to the sick man's room. When he entered it, under the custody of Miss Scarborough, he found that Augustus was there. The squire was sitting up, with his feet supported, and was apparently in a good humour. "Well, Mr. Grey," he said, "have you settled this matter with Augustus?"

"I have settled nothing."

"He has not spoken to me about it at all," said Augustus.

"I told him I wanted a list of the creditors. He said that it was my duty to supply it. That was the extent of our conversation."

"Which he thought it expedient to have in the presence of my friend, Mr. Jones. Mr. Jones is very well in his way, but he is not acquainted with all my affairs."

"Your son, Mr. Scarborough, has made no tender to me of any information."

"Nor, sir, has Mr. Grey sought for any information from me." During this little dialogue Mr. Scarborough turned his face with a smile from one to the other without a word. "If Mr. Grey has anything to suggest in the way of advice, let him suggest it," said Augustus.

"Now, Mr. Grey," said the squire, with the same smile.

"Till I get further information," said Mr. Grey, "I can only limit myself to giving the advice which I offered to you yesterday."

"Perhaps you will repeat it, so that he may hear it," said the squire.

"If you get a list of those to whom your son Mountjoy owes money, and an assurance that the moneys named in that list have been from time to time lent by them to him—the actual amount, I mean—then I think that, if you and your son Augustus shall together choose to pay those amounts, you will make the best reparation in your power for the injury you have no doubt done in having contrived that it should be understood that Mountjoy was legitimate."

"You need not discuss," said the squire, "any injuries that I have done. I have done a great many, no doubt."

"But," continued the lawyer, "before any such payment is made, close enquiries should be instituted as to the amounts of money which have absolutely passed."

"We should certainly be taken in," said the squire. "I have great admiration for Mr. Samuel Hart. I do believe that it would be found impossible to extract the truth from Mr. Samuel Hart. If Mr. Samuel Hart does not make money yet out of poor Mountjoy I shall be surprised."

"The truth may be ascertained," said Mr. Grey. "You should get some accountant to examine the cheques."

"When I remember how easy it was to deceive some really clever men as to the evidence of my marriage," began Mr. Scarborough— So the squire began, but then stopped himself with a shrug of his shoulders. Among the really clever men who had been easily deceived Mr. Grey was, if not actually first in importance, foremost at any rate in name.

"The truth may be ascertained," Mr. Grey repeated, almost with a scowl of anger upon his brow.

"Well, yes; I suppose it may. It will be difficult in opposition to Mr. Samuel Hart."

"You must satisfy yourselves at any rate. These men will know that they have no other hope of getting a shilling."

"It is a little hard to make them believe anything," said the squire. "They fancy, you know, that if they could get a hold of Mountjoy, so as to have him in their hands when the breath is out of my body and the bonds are really due—that then it may be made to turn out that he was really the heir."

"We know that it is not so," said Mr. Grey. At this Augustus smiled blandly.

"We know. But it is what we can make Mr. Samuel Hart know. In truth, Mr. Samuel Hart never allows himself to know anything—except the amount of money which he may have at his bankers. And it will be difficult to convince Mr. Tyrrwhit. Mr. Tyrrwhit is assured that all of us, you, and I, and Mountjoy, and Augustus, are in a conspiracy to cheat him and the others."

"I don't wonder at it," said Mr. Grey.

"Perhaps not," continued the squire; "the circumstances, no doubt, are suspicious. But he will have to find out his mistake. Augustus is very anxious to pay these poor men their money. It is a noble feeling on the part of Augustus; you must admit that, Mr. Grey." The irony with

which this was said was evident in the squire's face and voice. Augustus only quietly laughed. The attorney sat as firm as death. He was not going to argue with such a statement or to laugh at such a joke. "I suppose it will come to over a hundred thousand pounds."

"Eighty thousand, I should think," said Augustus. "The bonds amount to a great deal more than that—twice that."

"It is for him to judge," said the squire, "whether he is bound by his honour to pay so large a sum to men whom I do not suppose he loves very well."

"The estate can bear it," said Augustus. "Yes, the estate can bear it," said the attorney. "They should be paid what they have expended. That is my idea. Your son thinks that their silence will be worth the money."

"What makes you say that?" demanded Augustus.

"Just my own opinion."

"I look upon it as an insult."

"Would you be kind enough to explain to us what is your reason for wishing to do this thing," asked Mr. Grey.

"No, sir; I decline to give any reason. But those which you ascribe to me are insulting."

"Will you deny them?"

"I will not assent to anything—coming from you, nor will I deny anything. It is altogether out of your place as an attorney to ascribe motives to your clients. Can you raise the money so that it shall be forthcoming at once? That is the question."

"On your father's authority, backed by your signature, I imagine that I can do so. But I will not answer as a certainty. The best thing would be to sell a portion of the property. If you and your father will join, and Mountjoy also with you, it may be done."

"What has Mountjoy got to do with it?" asked the father.

"You had better have Mountjoy also. There may be some doubt as to the title. People will think so after the tricks that have been played." This was said by the lawyer; but the squire only laughed. He always showed some enjoyment of the fun which arose from the effects of his own scheming. The legal world, with its entails, had endeavoured to dispose of his property, but he had shown the legal world that it was not an easy task to dispose of anything in which he was concerned.

"How will you get hold of Mountjoy?"

asked Augustus. Then the two older men only looked at each other. Both of them believed that Augustus knew more about his brother than anyone else. "I think you had better send to Mr. Annesley and ask him."

"What does Annesley know about him?" asked the squire.

"He was the last person who saw him, at any rate in London."

"Are you sure of that?" said Mr. Grey.

"I think I may say that I am. I think, at any rate, that I know that there was a violent quarrel between them in the streets, a quarrel in which the two men proceeded to blows, and that Annesley struck him in such a way as to leave him for dead upon the pavement. Then the young man walked away, and Mountjoy has not been heard of, or, at least, has not been seen since. That a man should have struck such a blow, and then, on the spur of the moment, thinking of his own safety, should have left his opponent, I can understand. I should not like to be accused of such treatment myself, but I can understand it. I cannot understand that the man should have been missing altogether, and that then he should have held his tongue."

"How do you know all this?" asked the attorney.

"It is sufficient that I do know it."

"I don't believe a word of it," said the squire.

"Coming from you, of course I must put up with any contradiction," said Augustus. "I should not bear it from anyone else," and he looked at the attorney.

"One has a right to ask for your authority," said his father.

"I cannot give it. A lady is concerned whose name I shall not mention. But it is of less importance, as his own friends are acquainted with the nature of his conduct. Indeed, it seems odd to see you two gentlemen so ignorant as to the matter which has been a subject of common conversation in most circles. His uncle means to cut him out from the property."

"Can he too deal with entails?" said the squire.

"He is still in middle life, and he can marry. That is what he intends to do, so much is he disgusted with his nephew. He has already stopped the young man's allowance, and swears that he shall not have a shilling of his money if he can help it. The police for some time

were in great doubt whether they would not arrest him. I think I am justified in saying that he is a thorough reprobate."

"You are not at all justified," said the father.

"I can only express my opinion, and am glad to say that the world agrees with me."

"It is sickening, absolutely sickening," said the squire, turning to the attorney. "You would not believe now——"

But he stopped himself. "What would not Mr. Grey believe?" asked the son.

"There is no one knows better than you that after the row in the street, when Mountjoy was I believe the aggressor, he was again seen by another person. I hate such deceit and scheming." Here Augustus smiled. "What are you sniggering there at, you blockhead?"

"Your hatred, sir, at deceit and scheming. The truth is that when a man plays a game well, he does not like to find that he has any equal. Heaven forbid that I should say that there is rivalry here. You, sir, are so pre-eminently the first, that no one can touch you." Then he laughed long, a low, bitter, inaudible laugh, during which Mr. Grey sat silent.

"This comes well from you," said the father.

"Well, sir; you would try your hand upon me. I have passed over all that you have done on my behalf. But when you come to abuse me, I cannot quite take your words as calmly as though there had been no—shall I say antecedents? Now about this money. Are we to pay it?"

"I don't care one straw about the money. What is it to me? I don't owe these creditors anything."

"Nor do I."

"Let them rest then, and do the worst they can. But upon the whole, Mr. Grey," he added, after a pause, "I think we had better pay them. They have endeavoured to be insolent to me, and I have, therefore, ignored their claim. I have told them to do their worst. If my son here will agree with you in raising the money, and if Mountjoy—as he, too, is necessary—will do so, I too will do what is required of me. If eighty thousand pounds will settle it all, there ought not to be any difficulty. You can enquire what the real amount would be. If they choose to hold to their bonds, nothing will come of it. That's all."

"Very well, Mr. Scarborough. Then I shall know how to proceed. I understand that Mr. Scarborough, junior, is an assenting

party?" Mr. Scarborough, junior, signified his assent by nodding his head.

"That will do, then; for I think that I have a little exhausted myself." Then he turned round upon his couch as though he intended to slumber. Mr. Grey left the room and Augustus followed him; but not a word was spoken between them. Mr. Grey had an early dinner and went up to London by an evening train. What became of Augustus he did not enquire, but simply asked for his dinner and for a conveyance to the train. These were forthcoming, and he returned that night to Fulham.

"Well?" said Dolly, as soon as she had got him his slippers and made him his tea.

"I wish with all my heart I had never seen anyone of the name of Scarborough."

"That is of course—but what have you done?"

"The father has been a great knave. He has set the laws of his country at defiance and should be punished most severely. And Mountjoy Scarborough has proved himself to be unfit to have any money in his hands. A man so reckless is little better than a lunatic. But compared with Augustus they are both estimable amiable men. The father has ideas of philanthropy, and Mountjoy is simply mad. But Augustus is as dishonest as either of them, and is odious also all round." Then at length he explained all that he had learned, and all that he had advised, and at last went to bed combatting Dolly's idea that the Scarboroughs ought now to be thrown over altogether.

HATS OFF!

It has been formally set down in the records of the House of Commons, that the Queen's Message respecting the marriage of the Duke of Albany was "brought up and read, all members being uncovered." But everyone knows that it was not so, that the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, and the members for Leicester, Ipswich, and Falkirk failed to respect the custom of the Commons on such occasions. We have the Speaker's word for it that this violation of etiquette "must have been due to inadvertence," although neither of the gentlemen concerned in the "hat incident" said as much on his own behalf. Some of their friends sought to palliate their infraction of Parliamentary rules by asserting that certain ex-ministers had

offended in the same way a few nights before; but Sir Richard Cross proved that himself and his colleagues were better acquainted with the usages of the House than their accusers; and by putting the Speaker to the question elicited the information that the rule requiring Messages from the Crown to be received by members with heads uncovered, did not apply to answers or addresses brought down by the Controller, but only to messages under the sign-manual, read by the Speaker from the Chair.

This is not the only instance during the present reign of the serenity of the House being disturbed by the hat question; a like hubbub was raised forty-five years ago, upon the very first occasion of the House of Commons receiving a message from Her Majesty Queen Victoria. When Lord John Russell appeared at the bar on the 21st of June, 1837, to deliver a Message from the Crown, in spite of the cries of "Hats off!" and the Speaker's intimation that members must uncover, Sir James Graham did not bare his head until Lord John had got well on with his reading. Next day he explained that he meant no disrespect either to the Crown or the House, but had acted in strict accordance with old usage, which decreed that members should remain covered until they heard the word *Rex* or *Regina* pronounced, and for that he had waited. The Speaker admitted that the member for East Cumberland was in the right as to the practice of the House, and excused his own apparent deviation from the rules, on the score of desiring to save time and preserve order.

Cromwell flung his hat on his head when he pronounced sentence of extinction on the Long Parliament; Major Harrison took off his hat very ceremoniously as he approached the Speaker, bowed low, and kissing his hand took possession of it, and handed him out of the House, "as a gentleman does a lady, the whole House following." Chancellor Seafield made no such pretence of politeness in dismissing the last national Parliament held in Scotland. He put on his hat, saying, "There is an end of an auld sang!"

An Elizabethan versifier sang:

Before the Prince none covered are,
But those that to themselves go bare.

A couplet Charles the Second might have repeated for the behoof of Quaker Fox, who, being admitted to the royal presence, did not remove his broad-brim; where-

upon the Merry Monarch doffed his own head-gear, impelling Fox to say, "Put on thy hat, Friend Charles," and his majesty to retort, "Not so, Friend George, it is usual for only one man to be covered here." Penn was as obstinate on the hat question as Fox himself. On returning to his father's house, after serving a term of imprisonment, the old vice-admiral, anxious, if possible, to be friendly with his son, offered to ensure that he should not be molested for his practices or opinions, provided he would promise to uncover to the king, the Duke of York, and himself. After considering the matter for some days William informed his father that he could not agree to any species of hat-worship, and the irate admiral forthwith ordered him out of his house.

Not always have the "Friends" proved so staunch. Recounting his experience as one of a deputation of Presbyterian, Baptist, and Independent ministers, going to congratulate George the Fourth on his accession to the throne, Dr. Leifchild says: "While waiting there we saw a small deputation of Quakers advancing with an address, which one of their number held before him on a frame. One of the pages coming towards them to remove their hats, Dr. Waugh, who loved a joke, said to the foremost Quaker in an audible whisper, 'Persecution, brother!' to which the brother significantly replied, while pointing upwards, 'Not so bad to take off the hat as the head!'"

A grandee of Spain is privileged to wear his hat in his sovereign's presence for a certain time, carefully graduated according to his rank. John de Courcy, the conqueror of Ulster, won the same boon from King John by frightening the knights sent by Philip of France to call John to account for the murder of Arthur, out of the field; and then giving a taste of his quality by placing his helmet on a post, and cleaving it through with his sword, the weapon defying anyone but its owner to draw it out of the post again. This stalwart champion's descendants were wont to assert their privilege by keeping their heads covered for a moment or so in the royal presence; but at one of George the Third's Drawing-Rooms, the then Lord of Kinsale chose to wear his head-gear so long that the old king's attention was drawn to his unmannerly bravado. "The gentleman," said he, "has a right to be covered before me, but

even King John could give him no right to be covered before ladies."

At the trial of Mrs. Turner as an accessory to the murder of Sir Thomas Overbury, Sir Edward Coke ordered the prisoner to remove her hat, saying: "A woman may be covered in church, but not when arraigned in a court of justice." The accused tartly commenting on the singularity that she might wear her hat in the presence of God, but not in the presence of man, Coke replied, "For the reason that man with weak intellects cannot discover the secrets which are known to God; and, therefore, in investigating truth, where human life is in peril, and one is charged with taking life from another, the court should see all obstacles removed. Besides, the countenance is often an index to the mind, and accordingly it is fitting that the hat should be removed, and therewith the shadow which it casts upon your face." Mrs. Turner's hat was taken off, but she was allowed, for modesty's sake, to cover her hair with a kerchief.

Chief Justice Glynn did not find the Quakers so amenable to the order of the court, when at Launceston Assizes, in 1656, they made their first public protest against uncovering the head. Upon Fox and his companions in misfortune being brought into court, the judge bade them put off their hats. Instead of obeying, Fox asked for a scriptural instance of a magistrate commanding prisoners to put off their hats. The Chief Justice enquired in return if hats were mentioned at all in the Bible? "Yes," answered Fox, "in the third of Daniel, where thou mayest read that the three children were cast into the fiery furnace by Nebuchadnezzar's command, with their coats, their hose, and their hats on. Here was a proof that even a heathen king allowed men to wear hats in his presence." Not condescending to argue the matter further, Glynn cried, "Take them away, gaoler," and they were taken away, and thrust among thieves "a great while." When Penn and other Quakers appeared at the Old Bailey to answer their delinquencies, they entered the court covered, somebody removing their hats for them. Upon fairly getting inside, the court directed them to put their hats on, and no sooner had they done so than the Recorder demanded if they did not know they were in a king's court? Penn replied that he knew it was a court, and supposed it to be the king's, but he did not think putting off a hat showed any respect; whereupon he

was fined forty marks, and remarked that he and his friends had come into court uncovered, and in putting on their hats again they had only obeyed orders, therefore if anyone was to be fined, it ought to be the Bench. We suppose the Mine Court of the Forest of Dean was not a king's court, since witnesses before it were permitted to keep their caps on while giving their evidence, that is, if they claimed to be "free miners."

Jewish congregations worship with their heads covered; so do the Quakers, although St. Paul's injunctions on the matter are clearly condemnatory of the practice. The Puritans of the Commonwealth would seem to have kept their hats on whether preaching or being preached to, since Pepys notes hearing a simple clergyman exclaiming against men wearing their hats in the church; and a year afterwards (1662) writes: "To the French Church in the Savoy, and there they have the Common Prayer-Book, read in French, and which I never saw before, the minister do preach with his hat off, I suppose in further conformity with our church." William the Third rather scandalised his church-going subjects by following Dutch custom, and keeping his head covered in church, and when it did please him to doff his ponderous hat during the service, he invariably donned it as the preacher mounted the pulpit stairs. When Bossuet, at the age of fourteen, treated the gay sinners of the Hôtel de Rambouillet to a midnight sermon, Voltaire sat it out with his hat on, but uncovering when the boy-preacher had finished, bowed low before him, saying: "Sir, I never heard a man preach at once so early and so late."

As a token of respect, uncovering the head is one of the oldest of courtesies. Says an ancient rhyme:

If you any good man or woman meet,
Avail thy hood to him or her
And bid "God-speed dame or fere."

Shakespeare's Osric takes no heed of Hamlet's suggestion that he should put his bonnet to its proper use, "'tis for the head;" and when urged again to cover, replies: "Nay, in good faith, for mine ease, in good faith." Massinger's Well-born meeting Marrall in the open country, asks him, "Is't for your ease you keep your hat off?" And that worshipper of the rising sun answers:

Ease, and it like your worship!
I hope Jack Marrall shall not live so long,
To prove himself such an unmannerly beast,
Though it hail hazel-nuts, as to be covered
When your worship's present.

In Charles the First's time, even the ladies doffed their head-gear in salutation. The writer of Will Bagnall's Ballet says:

Both round and short they wear their hair,
Whose length should woman grace;
Loose, like themselves, their hats they wear,
And when they come in place,
Where courtship and compliments must be,
They do it, like men, with cap and knee.

Lamenting the decay of respect to age, Clarendon tells us that in his young days he never kept his hat on his head before his elders, except at dinner. A curious exception, that, to modern notions of politeness, but it was the custom to sit covered at meals down to the beginning of the eighteenth century. Sir John Finett, deputy master of the ceremonies at the Court of King James the First, was once much puzzled as to whether the Prince of Wales should sit covered or no at dinner in the presence of the sovereign, when a foreign ambassador was one of the guests; since the latter, as the representative of a king, was not expected to veil his bonnet. Giving James a hint of his difficulty, his majesty disposed of it when the time came, by uncovering his head for a little while, an example all present were bound to follow; and then, putting on his hat again, he requested the prince and the ambassador to do likewise.

"Hats need not be raised here," so, it is said, runs a notice in one of Nuremberg's streets. "Hats must be raised here," should have been inscribed on the Kremlin gateway, where a government official used to stand to compel passers-by to remove their hats, because, under that gate, the retreating army of Napoleon withdrew from Moscow. Whether the regulation is in force at this day, is more than we know.

The stockbrokers of New York have a hat-etiquette of their own, forbidding the wearing of a white hat when summer is over. How the rule is enforced may be learned from the following extract from a New York journal: "Wednesday last was 'White Hat Day' on the Stock Exchange. Formal notice had been given early in the week that at noon yesterday all summer 'tiles' would be 'called in,' but many of the members either forgot or disregarded the warning, and suffered in consequence. William Heath was the first victim. About one p.m. he entered the Exchange in a brown study, with his thumbs thrust in the arm-holes of his waistcoat. In a moment his tall white hat was whirling in the air, and as it touched the ground twenty brokers jumped upon it. This sort of

diversion was kept up the whole afternoon. Whenever a person entered wearing the proscribed head-gear, a shout went up, and before the alarmed broker could run the gauntlet, his hat was crushed out of shape." Before the afternoon was over a third of the brokers "on the floor" were bare-headed, and dozens of white hats ornamenting the gas brackets. In the evening the neighbouring hatters drove a brisk trade, and had golden reasons for blessing the institution of White Hat Day.

IN BONNIE SCOTLAND.

IV.

FOR a solid sturdy Scotch burgh commend us to Linlithgow, with its winding streets of grey-stone houses, its little shops undeveloped as yet into plate-glass fronts. Here is an ancient fountain whose trickle makes quite a stir in the profound stillness of the street. There is the little dusty untidy "plas" in front of the town-hall, with another fountain of the dry and dusty order, and a few loiterers of the gaberlunzie class lounging in the portico. A little beyond are county buildings, trim and grim of the newest style of architecture, and it requires a strong effort of imagination, although imagination is assisted and re-enforced by a memorial tablet in the wall of the said county buildings, to picture the street in its ancient aspect, the crowds of spectators, the stately train of the Regent Murray riding proudly through the press, the shot ringing out clear above the confused shouting of the crowd, the burst of horror that follows as the Regent falls heavily to the ground, the ring of horses' hoofs as the assassin madly gallops away.

But turn your back upon the High Street, and taking the town-hall in flank, mount the hill leading to the church and palace, and you come upon a really charming picture. It is the old world back again. A gateway of ancient pattern, with oval meurtrières looking out on each side, from which you would hardly be surprised to see protruded an arquebuse or match-lock, with a glimpse of a green sward through the open portals and the mellow stonework of the ancient palace, grouped with which is a venerable and yet graceful church of a fine florid Gothic, all seen in the stillness of a summer morning in a setting of rich foliage, while birds are chirping softly from the branches that wave over the quiet grave-yard.

Nor is the charm in any way lessened as

we enter the green court-yard of the palace. Square and fair rises the palace before us.

Of all the palaces so fair,
Built for the royal dwelling,
In Scotland far beyond compare,
Linlithgow is excelling.

No, there is nothing like Linlithgow, no such mediæval palace touched with the grace of the Renaissance, a palace that has not forgotten to be a fortress, and yet that rather suggests the rustle of women's robes than the stern clash of arms. And the turf is green, and the trees whisper softly in the breeze, and quiet paths lead down to a charming little loch with boats upon it, and swans, and the reflection of the green hills making a pleasant sheen upon its surface.

It is early yet, and the palace gates are not open till ten, but from the pleasant little park—they call it the Peel—we have a view of the former grand front of the palace, with its protecting bastions, and, high above, the now inaccessible grand entrance, with its quaint elaborate carvings, its niches for statues, and its loop-holes for musketry, with not a morsel left of the lofty drawbridge that once gave access to it.

Jennie tries to take a sketch of it while we are waiting, but gives up the attempt in despair, and in revenge pronounces the ensemble of the palace stiff and raide, with no variety of outline to tempt the artist. But there is a wonderful colour about the place nevertheless, especially when seen as now in a setting of dark lurid clouds. For the day has become overcast. There is a muttering of thunder in the air, and heavy rain drops patter among the trees. We have to make for shelter, and just then appears the custodian of the palace, and we follow him through the ancient gateway, with its darksome deserted guard-room, and its grooves for the iron-bound portcullis, while he throws open the gates with something of an air, as he proclaims the palace open for the day.

The first effect on entering is charming; a silent quadrangle, with a centre of mossy turf now shining with the most vivid green in the lurid light of the threatening storm, a sweet old broken fountain in the middle, all overgrown with weeds and wild flowers. The walls all about, with blank eyeless windows and a sad desolate aspect, are brightened in the sulphurous glow, while the gloomy interior assumes a deeper darker shadow. Thunder rolls sullenly in the distance, while pigeons, snowy-white

against the black clouds, flutter from one pinnacle to another, and the corbies croak dismally about the grass-grown ramparts.

"Will there not be danger, think you?" asks Mrs. Gillies of the janitor—pronounced "johnnytur," and real Scotch and not Latin as you might imagine. "Will there not be danger among these high walls in a thunderstorm?"

"Oh, mem," cries the janitor reassuringly, "ye'll be far safer here than anywhere else. Would the lightning touch these auld towers, d'ye think, that it's spared these three or four hundred year?"

There was a certain weakness in this argument. In fact it might just as well have been urged that the old building's turn had about come round, and that it might reasonably expect to be struck any minute. Only a weak argument often is more effective than a strong one, especially where women are concerned, and Mrs. Gillies, reassured as to her personal safety, ventures to ascend one of the broad stone staircases into the grand hall, where parliaments have been held, and where kings have feasted with all their chivalry. All is ruin; roofs and floorings have disappeared, but the masonry is strong and substantial as ever, the vaulted pavement as firm to the tread as when it rang under the armed heels of the Scottish cavaliers of old. And there, in one of the oldest portions of the palace, is the room where Mary was born—the hapless Mary Stuart—with the handsomely wrought stone fireplace, and the naked windows that look out upon the green court-yard and the silent fountain, but all open to the sky and to the driving shower that just now sets in.

For this palace was the favourite dwelling place of Mary's mother, Mary of Guise, a sister of the famous duke of that ilk, the great Catholic champion. And one does not wonder at her choice—so pleasant the site, warm and sunny, and with a soft fertile country about it, that might remind her of her native land.

But the place has memories also of another queen. An English princess this—Margaret Tudor.

A winding staircase takes you in perfect safety to the lofty battlements, and from the battlements higher still to a look-out tower, which still bears the name of Margaret's Bower. Here it is said was a favourite resort of Queen Margaret, and here she sat and watched, expecting to see her husband and his train ride over the hill, and wondering why they tarried so

long. Have they not sped? Have they not divided the prey? And the answer was the fatal news of Flodden, where the king and the flower of his nobility were lying stark and cold.

Anyhow, the view from Margaret's Bower is a charming one—hill and dale, glittering loch and sparkling stream all seen in bright sunshine, while the threatening thunder-clouds have drawn off, and are clustered in grand masses on the horizon. Below us the grassy ramparts and ruined walls, the hundred hearths that are all cold this day, the chimneys where the corbies have built their nests.

It is time to say good-bye to the palace, and we leave it with regret. There is still the church to be seen, but there may be some difficulty about that, the janitor opines. Perhaps there is a slight jealousy between palace and church, for our friend darkly hints of difficulties to be encountered before we attain our object. "The good lady who keeps the key lives somewhere in the toon, but it isn't always that she's in the way. But to-morrow, noo, she'll surely be there on the morrow, when there are four hundred cheap trippers coming into the toon."

"Four hundred extra people to be squeezed into this little town. And what will you do with them all?"

"Oh, they'll enjoy themselves fine," said the warder. "They'll climb all over the place, and run races in the Peel, and paddle about in the boats."

Just then a shadow crossed the ancient gateway—the gateway that leads into the common workaday world, out of this enchanted palace, where soft repose and peaceful decay seem to reign, in the absence of cheap trippers. "My! but you're in luck," cried the janitor, "for there she goes, the woman with the key."

But when we got outside, and into the church porch, the woman had disappeared, and the door of the church appeared still to be locked. And so we wandered round the grave-yard admiring the details of this fine old church, and presently came upon a man who was digging a grave, deep in loose friable soil, that must contain the dust of so many generations. And the grave-digger had seen what he thought was the figure of the church-keeper cross the path, and if she was not in the church, well, she must have flown over it.

And she was in the church after all, and not the deaf sour-looking old dame we had pictured her, but a pleasant well-favoured

body, who, busy with dusting and cleaning, had yet time for a word or two with her visitors. Like most of the old Scotch churches too large for present uses, the east end is walled off from the rest, and devoted to the worship of the Presbyterian kirk, all very neat and trim with pulpit and pew, and a gallery with a fine organ, and the royal arms in front. "Yon's the Royal pew," says the dame with something of respectful awe. Not that Royalty has ever sat there, "not since Jamie's time, unless it were a good while gone, when some duchess came over and stayed the service." But there is the pew waiting for the Royal Family, all duly dusted and polished by the careful hands of the goodwife.

"And if ye'll come this way," continued the dame in a tone of conviction, "I'll show you where the king got his warning before Flodden." This was in the transept of the church, the south transept, where there is good florid window-tracery, and where are kept relics of "papeestical days"—a broken shrine, a ruined pulpit of stone. "'Twas a veesion mebbe," says the dame, "or perhaps 'twas the queen sent somebody, for ye'll mind there was a warning against strange women."

But it is all written down in Scott's Marmion, and we have no time to linger any longer, except for a glance at the fine old nave, which is utilised as a Sunday school, and then away to the station.

For some little time I have felt sure that Uncle Jock has got a scheme in his head. He has been sending off letters and telegrams quite surreptitiously, and not business ones either, for about affairs at St. Mary's Axe Jock is as open as the day. And now it comes out as we walk up to the station. As well as his niece Jennie, who is his brother's daughter, he has a nephew, a sister's son—a sister who married a Grant, of Longashpan, or something near it—spelling not guaranteed. And this young fellow has been doing great things at the Glasgie University, taken his LL.B., or perhaps other more distinguished initials, and is bound to become an advocate before the Court of Session. He is not an advocate so far, but as yet in a chrysalis stage as law-clerk to Cannie and Cuttie, of Glasgie aforesaid.

"And wouldn't it be much more sensible," asked Jock, jingling the keys in his pocket, "if Jennie would take up with a lad like yon instead of a mere feckless artist body that would never be worth salt to his porridge?"

Now, Archie Grant, for that was the laddie's name, was safe to make himself a position in the world, and Uncle Jock, who was never likely himself to marry, would, as he modestly put it, give the young people a helping hand.

All this was preliminary to saying that he had asked young Grant, it being a leisure time in Glasgow just now, to join his uncle's party for a few days just to make Jennie's acquaintance, and he was to meet them that afternoon—he and his sister Mary—at Callander. And so Uncle Jock had determined to push on at once without stopping to visit Stirling, as he knew it was my intention to do.

Perhaps I was not altogether pleased at this intimation. I wonder what Uncle Jock thought I saw in him that I should smile at his jokes and put up with his Scotch stories, or why I should run here and there for Mrs. Gillies, and make myself a sort of walking guide-book for them all, if it were not that I had a sort of tenderness for Jennie. I had a great mind to turn sulky and pronounce for a circular tour on my own account. But there was something in the mention of Sister Mary that made me pause. If here were a real nice Highland lassie, now, it might reconcile me to Jennie's defection. So I promised Jock to meet them all at dinner that night, and after waiting a while, sitting on a rather uncertain board on the shabby little platform, our train came up, well filled with travellers, and we all got in in various carriages as there was room for us.

In my carriage there were two widows. And here I would make a remark upon the number of widows in Scotland. You meet them everywhere, nice bright-eyed creatures of all ages, and you can't help wondering how it is there should be a so much greater mortality of husbands than of wives. A friend, who is decorated with a blue ribbon, suggests that it is the whisky that causes such havoc among the men, while the females conduct themselves practically on temperance principles. Uncle Jock avers that it is the women's tongues that worry their partners into premature graves. But I am bound to say that this is a cause that would be equally operative south of the Tweed, where we don't notice—pace Mr. Weller, senior—any such superabundance. Anyhow here are two Scotch widows, the elder bright and stirring, with a nice Scotch accent, a purling and lingering over the words, as if they were sweet in the mouth, and a good

stress upon the last syllable. "If ye buy your tea from Dannie and Daffie," she is remarking to her companion, who is much more reticent and slightly scornful in manner, "ye'll be surprised how much better it tastes than the stuff ye buy at the sma' shops."

"I never go to small shops," replies the other rapidly and disdainfully, "and I always get my tea from MacVitties, whom everybody allows to be the only merchant who sells good tea." "I'm making no reflections, my dear, on other people's tea," replied the first widow in a conciliatory manner; "only for myself there's none I like better than Dannie and Daffie; and, indeed, all their things are good. There's eau de Cologne noo, did ye ever try their eau de Cologne? Give me your handkerchief, my dear." My dear indignantly snatched hers away. "Will ye try a little on your handkerchiefs, gentlemen?" said the widow, looking round with undiminished sweetness. Could anybody refuse? And then widow the second remarked in clear and cutting accents: "Some of their things may be good—their lavender-water, for instance, is not amiss, but their eau de Cologne, Mr. Dannie himself told me he could not recommend." There was general consternation at this, and even the amiable one looked vexed. "Well, and that is a curious thing to say, and they make it themselves." But presently she recovered her graciousness. "Well, there's their sweetmeat now, nothing can be better than their sweetmeat; now try one, my dear. Do, gentlemen, try a sweetmeat." Again could any one refuse? Heavens! what a powerful dose, taken innocently into the mouth as a morsel of preserved ginger! Surely all the biting condiments of the East had been boiled down into that morsel of ginger. The young widow immediately shot hers out of the window, but others were sandwiched in the middle of the carriage, and that resource was denied them. "Oh, there's nobody like Dannie and Daffie for sweetmeat," repeated the widow confidently and sweetly.

By this time we are at Falkirk, a district abounding in ironworks and tall chimneys, but presently we are out of the reek, and the bold outlines of the Ochill hills rise before us, green and yet desolate. And then somebody calls out Bannockburn, and we look out upon a station almost smothered in roses. But the battle-field is a mile and a half away. Still it is something to cross the burn itself that once ran

red with the blood of our countrymen. But in a few minutes we are in Stirling, and I in the bustle of the station taking a hasty but only temporary farewell of the Gillies family. "I don't see why I shouldn't see Stirling with you," says Jennie, rather inclined to be mutinous. "But you've seen enough for one day, Jennie," cries Uncle Jock determinedly.

Stirling is a bright and handsome town, without anything specially interesting about it till you mount the hill towards the castle, when half-way up the old church of Greyfriars presents itself invitingly before you. Square, solid, and grey, it retains a certain stately dignity as becomes a church where kings have been crowned, and where he who never feared the face of man, as was said of John Knox, has thundered out his discourse. Close by is a queer quaint Guildhall with a delightful old-fashioned guardian, one of the good old kind who has a perfect faith in all she has to show. "There ye'll find the chair the king was crooned in, and yon's John Knox's pulpit, and there's the auld toon weights—ye'll see a pun weighed as much as twa of ours, and yon's the stand for the hour-glass they had for the preaching, and yon's a hat that was worn i' the crusades," and so on. The hall itself was built by Robert Spittal, tailor to the most noble Princess Margaret, the queen of James the Fourth: that Margaret whom we have seen on the lookout from her lofty bower at Linlithgow, for the return from Flodden.

Just below the church, and seeming to belong to it, is a fragment of ancient and elaborate building known to this day as Mar's Work, the commencement of a palace for a Regent Mar, one of those innumerable regents so bewildering in Scottish history. It gives shelter at this present moment to a shabby man, who springs forward at the appearance of a stranger, and begins to recite a well-conned history of the place. And he wants to take me back over Greyfriars again, and among the monuments in the churchyard, about which I have been discreetly silent, as there are some enough to give anybody the nightmare. But now a drizzling rain is coming on, and I have no desire to see these things again, and so the shabby man darts upon somebody else.

The rain still continues, and the walk up the castle hill is rather bleak and unpleasant, when I spy a haven of refuge in the shape of a comfortable hotel bar. The young woman who presided over that bar was of a capable and energetic sort: no

wet circles on her counter, no debris of dirty glasses, everything washed up to the current moment, while still the girl had time to set to rights the world about her. The rain went on dripping outside, while every now and then a detachment of men tramped past, to or from the castle, wrapped in their grey great-coats. A sergeant in white fatigue dress has taken refuge from the rain—refuge and a hauf glass of Islay or Glenlivet. "Don't spoil it with water, sergeant," cries the landlord, a veteran of three score and ten, while the landlady, a little younger, with mottled apple-red cheeks, stands with her arm affectionately round his neck. "Don't spoil it, sergeant; you may trust me to put the water to it first." The sergeant grins and takes off his hauf with relish. "Deed that reminds me of a mon, as wonst done something for the meenister, who offert him a glass o' whisky. John was na slow at hanging on to that, and with that the meenister filled him a sma' oush o' sperrit and a bountiful supplee o' watter. 'Mon John,' said the meenister, who would be something of the T T perswashin, 'mon, I question if I'm right to give ye sperrit. There's death i' that cup, John.' And John tasted and set down again. 'Deed, meenister, ye were graundly right when ye said there was death i' the cup, for be me soul ye've drown' the muller.'

"Heck! heck!" laughed the old landlord, "ye must bring the miller to life again with another hauf glass, sergeant. Milly, fill a hauf glass for the sergeant." Milly complied, though reluctantly, murmuring that her grandfather would give away the coat off his back if he had nothing else to give, and the sergeant swallowed the dram rather shamefacedly, and hurried away as if to escape further hospitality. "Ye'll give my respects to Lizzie?" he added to a hasty farewell to those present. But Lizzie appeared next moment to receive the sergeant's respects in person—a wild-looking young Highland lassie, unkempt and rather tangled, like a heifer just fresh from mountain pastures, and she gave the sergeant a grip of the hand and danced about him with a joyous abandon that outraged Miss Milly's sense of discipline. "It wad be better ye'd wash yer face and come in to your work, Lizzie." And Lizzie dropped the sergeant's hand, and flinging her head back, advanced ready for battle. "Ye're no my mistress." And the old lady wagged her head, deprecating all hostilities. "Oh, she's a good girl—she's a

good girl, Lizzie; ye mustn't be hard upon Lizzie."

And with that the scene changed; the rain ceased and bright sunshine set everything in a glow and sparkle, while the grey ramparts of the castle glistened invitingly above. And so farewell to Lizzie and Milly and the bold sergeant, and hey for Stirling Castle with its memories of fact and fiction.

In the gateway I meet a vieille moustache, who is waiting there to act as guide, a fine intelligent fellow, who performs his descriptive duties something as if he were drilling a recruit. Leading the way through the outer defences he brings me into a fine open quadrangle. Here on the left you see the palace of James the Fifth. Observe the gratings on the windows and the strong fastenings. Those were put up in the time of James the Sixth, who passed his boyhood here, to save him from being surprised and carried off. His tutor, George Buchanan, lived below in the town. And then we turn to the Parliament House of the time of James the Third, and the Chapel Royal, built on the site of an older chapel by James the Sixth, in his manhood, but before he reached the crown of England.

Beyond, in the farthest and steepest corner of the enceinte is the most interesting part of the castle. A secluded garden is this, surrounded by ramparts and buildings, but where trees and shrubs grow bravely; there is one old holly-tree, still bright with last winter's berries, that must have seen stirring sights in its day. And looking upon this garden is the Douglas Room, where James the Second slew the Douglas with his own dagger. The room, as it now exists, is only a restoration of the original, which was burnt down some years ago; but the inner room, from the windows of which the body of the earl was thrown, is still in its original state. And there below, according to tradition, still lies the body of the murdered earl. But the pride of Stirling is in its ramparts and the magnificent view therefrom, and with conscious pride the old soldier leads the way to the corner of the ramparts known as the Queen's Look-out. But I must take breath before attempting to describe a scene that perhaps has not its equal in all this broad realm.

SONNET.

As some vast rock just parted from the shore
By little space of dimly-shadowed wave;
Seemeth to mock the angry storms that lave
Its strong dark breast that doth not heed the war,

Nor care for all the fearful seas that pour
 Their waters o'er it, as if ocean strave
 To draw him down to an uneasy grave
 Never to see the sunshine any more ;
 So would I, standing in life's bitter sea,
 In life's most awful moments of despair,
 Stand by unmoved a little from the land ;
 Safe in mine own heart's peace, my heart should be,
 And that wild sea that rages round should bear
 My burden for me ; if my home but stand.

UNMASKED.

A STORY IN FOUR CHAPTERS. CHAPTER I.

SUNDAY after Sunday, while the summer lasted, the Hansards, father, mother, son, and daughter, put off in a boat from their river-side lawn at Cookham, and pulled gently up to the foot of the Quarry Woods, where they landed for a walk to afternoon church at Cookham Dean. Old frequenters of the Thames as they were, they never tired of its placid waters, or grew impatient of its serenity.

To-day, in spite of the overpowering heat, their boat was to be seen creeping slowly up stream, finding a little shade now and again under the willows on the bank, but for the most part exposed to the full blaze of the early afternoon sun. It is true that General Hansard had suggested the advisability of remaining at home, but his son Robert had warmly repudiated a proposition so subversive of old-established custom, and had promised to row the whole way to their usual landing-place and back. Thus assured of his own immunity from work, the general had submitted, and was now dozing in the boat, while Mrs. Hansard kept just sufficiently awake to steer without making any egregious blunders, and Nettie, lying in the bows, dreamily regarded the sky, and the changing curve made against it by the high downs on her right, and the clumps of trees, and the low homesteads, as they caught in turn her meditative eye. She was taken aback when Robert, pausing in his labour, turned to her and observed in an aggrieved tone :

"I must say, Nettie, that when I undertook to do all the rowing, I did not reckon upon your doubling the work by putting all your weight into the bows. I call it heartless to lie there, and never so much as offer to go into the stern."

"Oh, Robert, why didn't you complain before?" said Nettie, sitting up and looking the picture of penitence. "I never thought of your finding it hard work."

"It's the state of the atmosphere," said Robert. "No, stay where you are now,

there's no sort of use in offering to move just as we are going to land."

"I had such faith in your herculean strength, you see," began Nettie, attempting to appease him by a compliment, but Robert interrupted her with brotherly incivility :

"That'll do, stick to your first excuse—you didn't think. And I do flatter myself that it was heroic on my part to toil on without a grumble. Get up and shake out your creases."

He brought the boat in to the bank, maliciously tossing back his sculls so as to splash their drippings over Nettie's dress.

"Oh, Robert my Sunday gown!" she exclaimed. "How mean of you!"

"As you indulge in Sunday idleness, sister mine, I really must beg of you to confine yourself to Sunday language," observed Robert as he handed his mother out of the boat. Nettie followed, laughing. She and Robert were the best of friends, and the time was distant indeed when their quarrels had ended seriously.

The Quarry Woods rise to some height directly from the water's edge, but of a summer day the relief from heat and glare afforded by their cool shadiness more than compensates for the steepness of the ascent. The Hansards, walking at a leisurely pace, emerged at length on to a piece of open sward, where it was their habit to make a halt: A tree, felled long ago, lay invitingly ready for tired wayfarers, and upon this they seated themselves. From this point lanes hedged in by tall blackberry bushes branch off to the right and left, while in front the ground falls rapidly away, only to rise again beyond, where a white chalk quarry is crowned by the village of Cookham Dean. The tiny church, not easily discernible by unpractised eyes, was doing its best now to attract attention by the tinkling of the magnified sheep-bell suspended in its tower, and in obedience to the summons the villagers, reinforced by many of the visitors staying in Marlow and Cookham, were flocking to the quiet service.

Suddenly the tinkling ceased.

"We are too late for church," said Nettie. "I knew we should be. Let us stay here, instead of going on and hurrying up the hill; it always looks so formidable from here." And indeed the white road skirting the quarry on the left, did, owing to the dip between it and the speaker, appear so sheerly precipitous that the people on it seemed gifted with an insect's power of ascending a perpendicular surface.

Nettie's proposal met with the approval of her parents, nor did Robert's energy suffice to prompt any renewal of expostulation on his part. Far from it, he resigned himself with evident content to the prospect of spending an idle afternoon.

Over the typically English landscape before them, the tranquil hazy air, silent save for the sibilant sounds never absent as a low accompaniment to summer heat, lay like an unlifted veil of holiness and peace. Nettie gave herself up to the spirit of the scene, and lost count of time as she watched the flitting of the clouds, the quivering of the leaves, the waving of the golden cornfields, and all the hundred signs that mark the coming and going of Nature's breath. At such times the mind offers no resistance to the inrush of external impressions; every sense drinks in the beauty of our fair green earth, while effortless thought, touching with the wings of a swift on subjects near and far, clothes the dry bones of our conscious perceptions with the rainbow tints of our unconscious fancy.

Nettie's reverie had lasted a long time when she was startled out of it by Robert, who, catching suddenly hold of her arm, demanded excitedly:

"Nettie, who is that—that lovely girl in white? Do you know her?"

"Who?" she asked, still only half alive to his words.

"Quick!" exclaimed Robert. "Look to your left, she will be out of sight in a moment!"

Nettie looked, and saw certainly the most beautiful human being that had ever appeared in flesh and blood before her young eyes. A girl rather older than herself was coming up the hill towards them in the company of a middle-aged lady, apparently her mother, and for a moment Nettie's beauty-worshipping mind was overpoweringly impressed by the vision of a face such as an angel might assume—tints of purest rose and white, eyes like sapphires, hair clustering in golden plenty round a low white forehead. Ah, the vision was over! the girl had turned her back upon the young enthusiasts and was walking slowly away.

"Oh, Robert, what a picture!" said Nettie.

"Who is she? Where does she come from?" asked her brother eagerly.

Nettie was unable to answer either question, but their curiosity was destined to be satisfied, for a minute or two later the ladies stood still, looked hesitatingly

about them, and finally came back to where the Hansards were seated.

With an apologetic blush the girl stopped before Mrs. Hansard and asked in a low pleasant voice:

"Can you tell us, please, if these are the Quarry Woods? We are new to the neighbourhood, and are afraid of losing our way."

"You are right so far," replied Mrs. Hansard, glancing critically at her questioner; "but it is hardly wise to enter the woods if you do not know your way. Do you wish to go to Marlow?"

"No, only for a walk. We live at Cookham Dean."

Robert had risen to his feet when the girl addressed his mother, and now, lifting his hat, he said with eager politeness:

"If you would allow me to accompany you, I could easily point out to you a safe path for a ramble."

Mrs. Hansard looked at her son in an astonishment not unmixed with displeasure. How, if he went off with these strangers, were they—his father, and mother, and sister—to get back to Cookham? Had he forgotten his promise?

Whether the two ladies noticed Mrs. Hansard's annoyance or not remained doubtful—at any rate, they ignored it as completely as did Robert.

"You are very kind," said the girl, directing at him one of the irresistible glances of which only eyes like hers know the secret.

Robert did not choose to wait for a possible remonstrance from his parents, but with a quick laugh, half-pleased, half-nervous, led the way for his new acquaintances.

Mrs. Hansard uneasily watched their retreating figures, and a shudder of apprehension passed through her, as she saw Robert help first the mother and then the daughter over the stile at the entrance to the woods.

The general, an easy-going man, had little sympathy with his wife's easily inflamed fears for the future.

"Robert's smitten," he remarked tranquilly.

"Really, general!" exclaimed Mrs. Hansard indignantly.

"What's the matter, my dear?"

"I wish you would not use such objectionable expressions."

"Very well; let us say that he has fallen prostrate before the shrine of beauty."

The general smiled, evidently pleased at the readiness with which this decidedly

commonplace phrase had occurred to him, but Mrs. Hansard continued to fidget.

"It is so thoughtless of Robert."

"But, mother, he will be back in a moment; he only went to show them the way," said Nettie soothingly. She herself had not been favourably impressed by the manner in which the strangers had literally carried her brother off, nor had the girl's beauty seemed of so unusual a type when offered for nearer inspection.

Another half-hour passed, and there was no sign of Robert. At last the general would wait no longer, and descending slowly through the woods to the riverside, he and his wife and daughter embarked without their recusant oarsman. After all, rowing down stream was not hard work now the worst of the heat was over, and Nettie, stripping off her gloves, and unbuttoning her tight sleeves, found herself easily capable of taking the boat down to Cookham. There was no hurry, no need for her to exert herself much, and so she pulled on idly and mechanically, wondering over Robert's strange behaviour. It seemed to her that the golden-haired girl was a kind of enchantress, who had been able, by a single dazzling glance, to cast a glamour over her steady simple brother. There had been something in his ordinarily impassive face, as he gazed at her, that was altogether new to Nettie. Was it prejudice, she wondered, that roused her dislike of the girl who could so influence Robert? Nettie was ashamed to acknowledge the antipathy with which she had for the first time in her life been inspired, and, with a liberality of mind peculiar to her, sought to argue herself out of it.

"At least," she resolved, "I will wait and see, and not judge hastily."

Mrs. Hansard did not take quite so philosophical a view of the matter, and when at length, much later in the evening, Robert reached home, and began hastily to apologise for his faithless treatment of them, she listened without allowing herself to be appeased.

"You do not improve matters by your excuses, Robert," she said stiffly; "but dropping that question for the moment, will you kindly tell me who and what these people are?"

"My dear mother, you don't suppose I pryed into their private affairs," returned Robert, laughing uncomfortably. "Of course I intended to come back in time to row you home, but I found that they were very bad hands at keeping their bearings,

and I simply couldn't leave them to get lost in the woods."

"Nonsense, Robert, as if on a Sunday afternoon they wouldn't have met plenty of people to direct them."

Young Hansard grew a little impatient.

"I have said I am sorry, mother, and can only repeat that I don't see how I could have acted differently."

"What is their name, Robert?" asked Nettie.

"Jackson. They have been living abroad, but have now come to Cookham Dean for good. They wanted a quiet country place, and have taken the cottage close to the church. It is very prettily situated, and furnished in exquisite taste, but I am afraid they will find it dull."

Mrs. Hansard looked up quickly.

"You went in, then?"

"Yes, mother; they asked me to take tea with them. I hope you will call there soon."

"I should like to know more about them first," returned his mother. "I cannot say that I am struck by their good breeding so far."

Robert gave a slight, almost imperceptible shrug of the shoulders, and left the room. Mrs. Hansard rose as if to follow him, but the general, who had as yet taken no part in the conversation, laid his hand upon her arm.

"Leave him alone, dear," he said; "he is not in the mood to be taken to task."

Mrs. Hansard submitted reluctantly, and the general continued:

"These things are best treated lightly, or even passed over entirely. You rouse his love of independence by opposing him. Besides, why shouldn't he make the acquaintance of a lovely girl like that? You know nothing against her."

"I know nothing about her either way," objected Mrs. Hansard.

"I should advise you to trust to Robert's good sense. He's a steady fellow."

The general's easy-going counsel did not suit Mrs. Hansard, who was really alarmed about her son. She, like Nettie, had noticed the expression of his face as he caught at the pretext for accompanying the Jacksons on their walk, and she could not but feel that the incident of to-day might have serious results.

CHAPTER II.

ROBERT'S conduct during the next few weeks was not calculated to allay his mother's anxiety. Too frank to keep his movements and doings a secret from

his family, he openly entered upon an intimacy with the Jacksons, visited them, met them out walking, lent them books, marked out their tennis-lawn for them, and gained them friends in the neighbourhood.

On all sides they were liked and well received. Mrs. Hansard alone held back and refused to call. At length Robert appealed confidentially to Nettie on their behalf, and so persuasively did she represent his wishes to her mother that Mrs. Hansard yielded, and consented with a sigh to the sacrifice of prejudice demanded of her. And at least—so she consoled herself—something would be gained: the means, namely, of forming a personal opinion upon the merits of this apparently irresistible mother and daughter.

It was with feelings of mingled curiosity and condescension that she alighted one afternoon before the low porch of Mrs. Jackson's cottage, and entered the drawing-room in which Robert made himself so much at home. Her quick investigating glance was not lost upon Mrs. Jackson, who smiled without resenting it. She was a handsome woman of about five-and-forty, well-dressed, and almost superfluously stylish in manner. There was nothing to which Mrs. Hansard could take exception either in the tastefully-furnished room or in its owner; on the contrary, she was pleasantly impressed, and found her own stiffness rapidly wearing off.

The conversation flowed easily and fluently. Mrs. Jackson appeared to be an exceptionally clever talker, and surprised her visitor by the interesting accounts she gave of foreign life.

"You know," she said with smiling frankness, "Rosalind and I have lived abroad, for economical reasons, ever since my husband's death. At last we have come back to dear old England, and hope we shall not find our fatherland ruin us. I should be sorry to have to leave here, for this little cottage suits us so well."

She turned to Nettie.

"Can you stay for a little tennis, Miss Hansard? We expect a few friends for a game presently. Our lawn is small, you see," she continued, opening the French window, and inviting her visitors into the garden; "but we manage to make it do. Ah, there is Rosalind!"

Once more Nettie was struck by the beauty of this girl, who had just come into the room behind them. In a white tennis-dress, drawn into folds under knots of pale

blue ribbon, Rosalind Jackson was an exquisite embodiment of youth and grace, and the slight start of surprise and blush of pleasure with which she recognised Mrs. Hansard, added greatly in that lady's eyes to the charm of her appearance.

"I did not know who it was," she said, "or I would have come down at once. Were you looking at our little bit of a garden? You cannot imagine what a delight it is to us. Every blossom is a new treasure."

The girl's voice was soft and her accent pure and correct. To Nettie it seemed studiously so, and suggestive of elocution-lessons, but who could object to a failing so obviously on the right side? There was no denying Rosalind's attractiveness. It lay not only in her appearance at first sight, but in the varying charm of her expression and demeanour, which, changing from bright to soft, from grave to gay, from quick to thoughtful, revealed new possibilities of manner to our quiet observant Nettie. Could it be quite natural, quite unconscious? A fresh doubt sprang up in her mind, but, even while she doubted, she was fascinated.

More visitors arrived, and the Hansards rose to leave.

"What do you think of them?" asked Mrs. Hansard of her daughter as they drove off together.

"I don't quite know," said Nettie slowly.

"They seem ladylike enough."

"Yes; and Miss Jackson is wonderfully pretty, mother."

"Indeed she is. I can't be surprised at Robert's admiring her; and yet it makes me uneasy. I wish I knew more about them."

"So do I," agreed Nettie; "they seem quite open and talk of Mr. Jackson's profession, and about their travels, and yet there is nothing to lay hold of, nothing to tell one definitely who they are."

"That didn't occur to me," returned Mrs. Hansard; "I confess I was agreeably disappointed. Why, there's Robert! Draw up by Mr. Robert, Wilson."

The coachman obeyed, and Mrs. Hansard leant out to speak to her son.

"Where are you off to?" she enquired.

"Mrs. Jackson's," he replied.

"I am getting accustomed to that answer," said Mrs. Hansard, shaking her head a little sadly. "Well, dear boy, I have done as you wished. I have been to call there."

"Thank you, mother," said Robert, pressing the hand she had laid on the

carriage door. "I hope it will lead to a closer acquaintance; Miss Jackson would be a delightful companion for Nettie; wouldn't she, old lady?"

Nettie, thus appealed to, involuntarily shook her head. She admired Miss Jackson, but stronger than the admiration was her instinctive perception that anything like intimacy was impossible between them. Without further trial she knew that in character they were radically different.

Robert was annoyed at her gesture and walked on abruptly. He was one of those young men, not very wise or discriminating, who indulge in wide generalisations about women, and who, among many opinions concerning them, include the ineradicable belief that one woman's bad opinion of another is in all cases prompted by jealousy. It annoyed Robert that his sister should not be above this petty feminine weakness.

"But they are all alike in that," he soliloquised as he strode on, blind to the far more obvious and reasonable theory that a woman is as much the best judge of her own sex as a man is of his. A man is apt to judge merely by what he sees in a girl; a woman goes deeper, and out of her own nature comprehends the motives at work. Nettie had made no mistake in suspecting Rosalind of artificiality, and it would have been well for Robert had he allowed her opinion to have more weight with him.

His heart beat fast as he reached the Jacksons' cottage, nor did Rosalind's reception of him tend to calm his pulses. A swift glance of welcome from the sapphire eyes, a blush on the soft cheeks, gave him to understand that his coming was not indifferent to her, and during the afternoon a hundred trivial signs seemed to betray her desire to please him. Not that she laid herself open to the disapproval of a single acquaintance present; for that she was far too skilful. He and he only was allowed to read and understand her manner, and with pride he noted the sweet and shyly-manifested signs of her regard. Twilight broke up the party, and still Robert lingered on. No doubt of this girl's truth rose within him, no fear of possible danger from her, no sense of anything strange about her or her mother, only an ardent longing to call her his.

And before he left her that night his avowal had found utterance, and Rosalind had promised to be his wife.

The news, hardly unexpected, was received by his parents and Nettie with very

doubtful satisfaction. The general called his son precipitate for embarking on an engagement after an acquaintance of less than six weeks. Mrs. Hansard hoped tearfully that he might be happy, while Nettie, chilled by an unconquerable sense of something wrong, raised her deep affectionate eyes to his face, with an unmistakable expression of anxiety in them as she faltered out her sisterly congratulations.

However, no interference was possible, for Robert, thanks to the bounty of his late grandfather, was completely his own master. In his exultant happiness the young man could not refrain from a few strong words on the want of sympathy shown him by his family, whereupon Mrs. Hansard recurred to her old objection that she knew hardly anything about Miss Jackson.

"Is that my fault?" demanded Robert, "or is it Miss Jackson's? If you had chosen she might have been intimate here by now, but you have held aloof, and given her no chance of winning your affection. Mother, for my sake be generous, and treat her now with all the warmth and kindness she will look for."

His appeal was not without effect, and Rosalind had no reason to complain of the Hansards' behaviour towards her. She was conscious, however, of the want of spontaneity in their friendliness, and set herself with much tact to overcome it, succeeding easily with the kindly general, and after a fashion with Mrs. Hansard, who confessed that she had no fault to find. With Nettie, Rosalind found her powers of attraction fail her entirely, for here she encountered a nature wholly antagonistic to her own, and impenetrably reserved. Nettie was polite but distant, conscious of a growing distrust in Rosalind, and worried by fears for her brother.

HOPE'S TRAGEDY.

A STORY IN EIGHT CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER V.

BERTHA had no card, and was announced at once to Miss Hamilton, who was standing by the drawing-room fire, and had just taken her hat off. She looked young and handsome, with a touch of colour which the wind had given her. As Bertha came in, she was smiling at herself in the chimney-glass, and had put up both hands to stroke her disordered curls.

Bertha's name was quite as startling as she could have expected. Miss Hamilton

started, turned round, and gazed at her vaguely for a moment. Her first thought was, of course, the right one; then came a hasty doubt, for Mr. Hope's appearance had been very ornamental, and this young woman did not look as if she could be his sister—such a plain commonplace little creature, with a black hat of frightful shape rammed down over her nose, and a gown and jacket equally hideous and ordinary.

"What a creature! Nonsense! it can't be," thought Dora Hamilton; and then, as the figure advanced, she made a little bow and said: "Miss Hope? I think there must be some mistake; isn't there?"

"No, I think not, if you are Miss Hamilton," replied Bertha.

Something in the tone of her voice, which was very good and refined, told Dora that her first fear was realised. She coloured with annoyance and confusion, drew herself up haughtily, and murmured "Oh!" as a kind of question, regarding Bertha with unfriendly eyes.

"I have come to you, Miss Hamilton," said Bertha stiffly—she was too angry to be nervous—"to bring a message."

"Oh yes; from whom is it?"

"From my brother, of course."

"Your brother—Mr. Hope? You are Mr. Hope's sister? I ought to have known, but there is not much likeness," said Dora with a sudden change of tone, taking her visitor's hand and making her sit down near the fire.

"None at all," said Bertha, smiling grimly; "but you remember him? You are not astonished at his sending you a message?"

"No; I am glad he is well enough. He has been very ill, hasn't he?"

"Yes, very ill. It has been a hard fight, and we scarcely thought he would pull through. Perhaps—I don't know—the move down here may do him good, unless it does him the greatest harm, which I have feared all along."

Dora Hamilton's face was turned away towards the fire, and the look with which Bertha pointed her hint was lost upon her.

"Did you say he was here?" she asked in a low voice.

"He, my mother, and I are staying in Seaview Place. He is still terribly weak, but nothing would satisfy him but coming to Beachcliff, and as he lay at the window this afternoon, he saw you pass, and insisted on my going to you at once, and begging you to come and see him—now, he said. People in his state are unreasonable."

"What a pity he came!" said Dora, half to herself.

"So I thought, and now I am quite sure of it. And is your brother at home? Willie was anxious to see him about this insurance business."

"No; my brother is away. I don't know when he will be back—in a week I suppose. The insurance company is a dreadful disappointment, indeed," she said, looking round, and speaking in an odd hurried way. "I wish we had, none of us, ever had anything to do with it."

"Is it so bad as that?" said Bertha gravely.

"Oh, I suppose so; I don't know. I don't understand business, but Julius said to me that it was only a question of time. Of course they will hold on as long as they can. Don't tell your brother; it might stop his getting well. I don't suppose he knows how bad it is. In fact, please, you must not tell anybody."

"It is a very serious affair," began Bertha.

"Yes; but we shall not be quite ruined, I am glad to say. All mamma's fortune is quite safe. It is only Julius who will lose seriously."

"You must be thankful for that," said Bertha.

Her companion did not at all notice the bitterness in these words. Her head was too full of her own concerns to take in the commonplace remarks of poor Miss Hope.

"I hope your brother won't mind much, and will get over it," said Dora after a short silence.

"Get over what? His illness, his ruin, or the greatest trouble of all?"

There was no ignoring such a speech as this. Dora blushed scarlet, but did not seem angry at this plain-speaking. She had still a heart, poor thing, which would sometimes declare itself.

"Don't be unfair to me," said Dora, looking on the floor. "Of course you have only heard his side. But surely you knew it was conditional. Julius wouldn't let me write—he said it was so plainly impossible now, in this state of things. Then he was ill, and the future looked so confused, and I did not know what to say if I wrote. By-and-by, of course, when the smash comes, he must have had an answer if he asked for one. Things arrange themselves—I am sure I never dreamed how it would be—and I can't tell you everything. But he certainly understood the condition. I depend on mamma and Julius, and we couldn't anyhow have married without anything to live on."

"I dare say there was a condition, as you say," said Bertha, after patiently listening to this explanation. "No doubt it is as well for you to feel yourself free. Only Willie's idea was that you cared for him."

"So I did. I hardly dare to go and see him. I am the most miserable creature in the world."

"In the world!" Bertha did not exactly smile at this declaration, for she thought that in one sense of "the world" it might be true.

"You need not be afraid to see Willie," she said; "he is very weak, he will not tease you much, I think."

"Poor fellow, I should like to see him," hesitated Dora. "If you can promise me that he won't expect any explanations and things. I don't deny it, he has something to complain of; still he knew all along that I was not free."

"I think the sight of you will do him good," said Bertha, "if you will not say anything too hopeless and cruel. That, in his present state, might even kill him. Be kind and nice to him, and let him have a little hope if you can. I almost think you like him still."

Bertha was surprised to find herself pleading for her brother with this woman, whom she had set down as heartless. The fact was that Bertha could not always be consistent in her hardness and strength of character. She was Willie's sister, though his superior; she could be bewitched, like him; and by this time Dora Hamilton was attracting her strongly with the naturalness, frankness, almost humility, which matched so oddly with her stately bearing.

"Ah, you don't know, Miss Hope," said Dora; but then she quietly got up and put on her hat again. "I ought not; it is foolish—but I must," she said. "Yet what is the use of deceiving him?"

"Oh, I did not ask you to deceive him," said Bertha.

Dora only answered this by a sad little laugh.

"I will go with you now, if you like," she said.

In the fading light of the small room looking on the sea Mrs. Hope was sitting beside her son. He had hardly spoken since Bertha went out, but had lain there with his hollow eyes wide open, and bright spots in his cheeks which frightened his mother a little. She did not know Bertha's errand or the reason of his suspense, and she was hardly even aware two people were

coming softly upstairs, till Willie half lifted himself up, and put out his thin hand eagerly.

"You must let us be alone together," he said.

"You and Bertha?" said Mrs. Hope rather breathlessly; she thought for a moment that he was feverish again, and light-headed.

"No. Dora—of course, Dora."

Then Bertha was at the door, saying:

"She is come, Willie," and Willie suddenly struggled off the sofa to his feet, and made two steps towards the door, stopping to lean on the back of a chair, while Dora Hamilton followed his sister into the room.

She was met with no reproaches; those she need not have feared. He simply grasped her hand, and then let his mother, who saw that he was nearly falling, help him back to the sofa again. He lay and gazed at her in silence for a moment; they were all silent, for Dora could only look at him in horrified surprise. Could this wreck be the handsome popular Willie Hope of last year! the man whom she had actually promised (on conditions) to marry! The romantic recollections which had brought her to him were fading fast away. She had never liked sick people; she could imagine being quite afraid of a ghostly, hollow-eyed, desperate-looking creature like this, whose hand in holding hers seemed actually to scorch it. What mean little women! what a poor squalid room! thought Miss Hamilton, who had lately come to the conviction—in fact, within the last few weeks—that sentiment was all nonsense, and that riches were the only real satisfaction in this life. Fancy belonging to people like these—living in rooms like these! How could she ever have dreamed of running into such a danger!

She was seized with a wish to escape instantly, wondering how she could have been so foolish as to come; but, of course, that could not be. He held out his hand again, and she was obliged to put hers into it, though slowly and reluctantly.

"Sit down here, by me," said Willie. "It was good of you to come. Mother, you haven't spoken to Dora."

The christian-name startled Miss Hamilton, and jarred upon her terribly. Did he think she was engaged to him, then, in spite of everything? She gave her hand to Mrs. Hope in a cold haughty manner which impressed and frightened her very much. Bertha, in the background, saw it all, and felt cruelly disappointed,

suspecting now that her first impressions were right, yet at a loss to account for the change. Miss Hamilton had certainly been almost sweet to her. Poor Dora! No slight acquaintance was likely to understand a woman who could never understand or depend upon herself.

Mrs. Hope and Bertha went out of the room presently, leaving the young people together. About a quarter of an hour passed, and Bertha heard the house-door open and shut, but did not guess that the visitor had gone away. She sat on in her room for ten minutes more, hoping and praying for Willie's happiness, though with sore doubts troubling her all the time. Then she was called to the drawing-room by the quick impatient ringing of his little hand-bell. She ran downstairs, prepared to say good-bye to Miss Hamilton; but she found the fire nearly out, and her brother alone.

"She's gone!" exclaimed Bertha.

"She has been gone an hour. She only stayed five minutes. Where have you been? I'm frozen to death," said Hope impatiently.

"Wasn't she nice to you?" asked Bertha.

"Oh, my dear, you had better not think any more about her."

"Nonsense! Yes, of course she was nice to me. She asked about my illness; she meant to write when I was better. What more could one expect? Of course she is not used to sick people. Julius never had a day's illness in his life, and never will. I did not suppose for a moment that you would appreciate her; she is not your sort at all."

"I liked her very much, when I talked to her," said Bertha meekly. "But tell me, Willie, why did she go so soon? and is she coming again?"

"Of course she is coming again. Surely you didn't expect her to stay long at this time of night! If I could have walked home with her"—half getting up, and flinging himself down again—"people like her don't walk about in the dark by themselves. Bring me some more wraps, Bertha. I thought you were lost, or dead, or something. The fire was out, and I was dying with cold—of course, after being in a fever all the afternoon. Thanks, that's better," as Bertha covered him with a shawl. "Now go away, and stay away. I don't want either of you; I'm going to sleep."

An hour later, Bertha stole to the door, and opened it noiselessly. There she stood and listened in consternation to a smothered sound of violent piteous sobbing. Willie

was crying like a child in an agony of sorrow, crying as if his heart would break. Bertha's heart seemed to stand still as she listened to him. For a moment she doubted whether she should try to comfort him; but she reflected that all her consolations would be useless, that he would probably be angry at being found out, and stepping softly back she closed the door, leaving the poor sick fellow to grieve alone over his faithless love.

CHAPTER VI.

THAT painful evening was followed by a return of the fever, and for several days Hope was too ill to leave his room. His mother was furious with Miss Hamilton, and even with Bertha, who had brought her to the house, but Bertha was patient, and talked things over with her reasonably, till the poor woman was reconciled to her one stay, and even confessed that if Bertha's advice had been taken, they would never have come to Beachcliff at all.

Once or twice after this, Bertha saw Miss Hamilton in the distance, but, of course, did not think of approaching her. One day in the middle of the week, when Willie was a little better, she met her walking with Sir Samuel Grimes. Bertha bowed, and was going to pass without speaking, but Dora stopped and held out her hand.

"How do you do? How is your brother?" she said quite pleasantly.

Bertha's stiff face expressed no particular feeling. Sir Samuel, bestowing a slight stare on this humble person, probably thought the brother was some sick tradesman, in whom the beautiful and kind Miss Hamilton was pleased to be interested.

"Thank you," said Bertha. "He has been very ill ever since Saturday. He is a little better to-day," and she walked on.

"Those kind of people get awfully uppish, don't they?" chuckled Sir Samuel Grimes.

Dora gave some vague answer and looked away at the sea. In one of her usual fits of inconsistency, she just then hated herself, and Sir Samuel, and everybody at Beachcliff, except one poor, sick, sorrowing family in Seaview Place, the idea of belonging to which, last Saturday, had seemed too great and painful a degradation. She would have liked just then to turn and run after Bertha, to go home with her, to raise up Willie with a word and a touch from his sick-bed. It was in her power, she knew; but there are things in one's power that

one can't possibly do, and, after all, she might have repented an hour afterwards.

However, some sort of defiance of present circumstances made her say to her companion:

"Do you remember Mr. Hope? That was his sister."

"Really! you don't say so! I remember him uncommonly well," said Sir Samuel with emphasis.

He glanced at Dora, reminding himself that she was eccentric, and wishing to avoid any risk of offending her. But she looked just as usual, and he was encouraged to go on with a satisfied smile:

"Poor Hope, to be sure! He wasn't a fellow I took to exactly. He didn't ring true, somehow—too much show, too much strut, as if the world belonged to him, which it didn't, you know."

"You were jealous of him," said Dora half playfully; "and so were a great many other people."

"Oh, come—well, perhaps we were, and not without reason."

"I didn't mean that," she said almost to herself, for she had been thinking more of Hope's general pleasantness and popularity.

"Julius sent him to Suez, didn't he?" Sir Samuel went on. "Has he turned up again? Not here, surely?"

"He came home from Suez very ill of fever. His mother and sister brought him here last week for change of air. You heard her say that he has been very ill again. He is so changed that nobody would know him."

"Lost his beauty, has he? You have seen him, then?"

"I have. Now, suppose we talk about something else."

Sir Samuel made no objection. For the moment his face had become rather gloomy; but Dora's power over him was almost unlimited, and she had no difficulty, as they walked on, in restoring him to his usual complacency.

On Saturday afternoon, Dora went once more to Seaview Place, and asked for Miss Hope. Bertha was out, but Mrs. Hope received the visitor in a downstairs room; she would not risk letting Willie know who was there.

She was at first inclined to be extremely fierce and to show a sort of angry surprise at Miss Hamilton's coming again—as if she had not done harm enough already! But she was disarmed by Dora's manner, which had none of the haughtiness of the

other day. The faithless girl was very pale, and sad, and calm. If she showed no strong feeling, there was at least no offensive coldness, no grand air, nothing to suggest a heartless flirting nature. Mrs. Hope listened, and looked, and almost suspected that Bertha was wrong, that Willie was breaking his heart for nothing, that Miss Hamilton's attachment to him was stronger than any of them believed. But this happy suspicion did not prevent her from shaking her head and firmly saying, "No—impossible!" when the strange young woman asked almost timidly if she might see her son.

"He is not strong enough to bear the excitement," said Mrs. Hope. "He has been ill, you know, ever since you came last Saturday. I will say that you called to ask for him, if you like; that will please him, I dare say."

Dora looked at her in an odd dreamy way, and made no answer for a minute.

"There was nothing last Saturday to agitate him," she said.

"Nor to comfort him. You found him in suspense, and you left him there," answered Mrs. Hope with some sharpness. "I cannot have that over again."

Dora looked down, changing colour a little. Then, while Mrs. Hope was watching her with painful anxiety, thinking that perhaps she would tell her something, she got up, drawing herself to her full height with a shiver.

"I'm sorry you won't let me see him," she said. "I had something to say, and I shall not be able to come again. I am going away next week."

"For a long time?"

"Yes, for a long time. I wished to tell him that—that I was going. I meant him to know before this."

"Does it matter to him so very much, do you think, Miss Hamilton?" said Mrs. Hope, with tears in her eyes, her self-restraint failing suddenly.

"I hope not," Dora answered with grave earnestness. "I hope he will be better soon. Good-bye!"

Her dignity was no doubt a possession very valuable to herself. It had saved her from many scenes, from many reproaches, by the impression it made on people of quicker emotions. Any ordinary girl would certainly not have left Mrs. Hope that afternoon with flying colours, as Dora Hamilton did, shaking hands with Willie's mother, and walking away, calm and graceful, from the ruins she had made.

On her way home along the Parade she met Mr. West. This young clergyman had only just come back to Beachcliff after a month's holiday. He came up smiling to speak to her, and began to hurry out some remarks which she cut short at once.

"Do you know that your friend Mr. Hope is here again?" she said to him.

"No. Where? Is he really?" stammered West, blushing and astonished, perhaps more at her manner than the news. "He had come home, very ill; that was the last news I heard. Is he better? Why does he come here, I wonder?"

"No, I think he is not much better," said Dora. "His mother and sister brought him here for change of air, but I believe he is worse. You had better go and see them—they live in Seaview Place. They don't know anybody here."

"Of course I'll go. Thank you for telling me."

They were both moving on, when some hesitation in her manner made him linger a moment. As if it were an after-thought, speaking over her shoulder in a careless sort of way, Dora said:

"By-the-bye, Mr. West, if you happen to think of it, you might tell them about me. I have not had an opportunity. I should rather like them to know."

"Oh, certainly," said West; but as he walked on, the shadow of his office began to fall on his bright holiday face. A clergyman has more disagreeable things to do than anyone else in the world. He suspected that this was a very painful task which she had given him, yet he never thought of shirking it, for he was a worthy fellow, and faithful to his friend.

CHAPTER VII.

MR. WEST had never forgotten that afternoon, a year ago, when Mrs. Hamilton and Julius had made him the unwilling instrument of dissecting poor Hope. He had been very much surprised, after that, by Hope's telling him, just before he started for Suez, that he was engaged to Miss Hamilton. Of course he congratulated his friend, but in his heart he was very sorry, for he did not like the Hamiltons, and had a deep distrust of Julius and his schemes. Hope knew that well enough, and knew that he was, in all probability, making a fool of himself, and risking the ruin of his family, for Dora Hamilton's sake; and thus there arose a certain coolness between the friends.

The Hamiltons went away from Beach-

cliff for the summer. When they came back in the autumn, Mr. West heard one day that the engagement was at an end; in fact, Julius and his mother denied that it had ever really existed.

Dora said nothing, but after a time she proved these reports true by making a fresh arrangement, the news of which poor West was now asked to break to his old friend.

The Hopes were delighted to see him when he walked in that Sunday afternoon, and Hope, who had now got back to his sofa in the drawing-room, was all the more pleased to see this companion of old days, in that every faith and friendship seemed to be slipping away from him. They all talked cheerfully, keeping on the surface of things. The longer young West looked at that worn, pitiful, eager face, the harder his task seemed to become. He could read in his friend's eyes what had brought him to Beachcliff, with what anxious pain of mind he was pursuing a shadow. He felt quite sure of what he had always suspected—that the Hamiltons had behaved abominably.

"Has anybody been to see you?" Mr. West asked casually.

"No," said Hope. "They don't know I'm here; at least, I have seen Miss Hamilton once, and she called yesterday, but my mother wouldn't let her in."

"He is almost too weak for visitors," said Mrs. Hope, while the young men looked at each other. Hope with something of his old defiance, West sadly and pityingly.

In fact, there was so much pity in the clergyman's honest face, that his friend flushed with a little anger.

"I like seeing people," he said. "She might as well have come in, as she took the trouble to come at all. I shall not see her again at present, for she is going away next week. I want to see Julius Hamilton; we must have a talk on business. Have you heard when he is coming back?"

"He's at home. He was at church this morning."

"Are you likely to see him? I wish you would take a message from me."

"If you like. Of course, you know, he is come home for this affair on Tuesday."

"What affair?" said Hope unsuspiciously.

"This wedding."

Nobody spoke for a moment. Something in Mr. West's look and tone told the women, at least, what was coming. Bertha

got up and came round to the head of the sofa, standing there, as if seized with a sudden wish to look out of the window: but neither she nor her mother made any attempt to check the telling of the news; they felt that the worst was come, and would soon be over; better for Willie than the wearing pain of long suspense. None of them quite knew whether his thoughts were following theirs; certainly he smiled faintly as he asked:

"Who is going to be married on Tuesday? Julius himself? Who is bold enough to marry him?"

"No, not Julius; but he is almost as much wanted, you see. Of course he has to give her away."

There was another silence. Willie Hope turned his head on the cushion and looked out, looked up and away at the sky that shone down clear and blue into his eyes. He was not, as it seemed, in the least excited by the news, or even astonished. His mother looked at him in trembling relief, and Bertha, her eyes dimmed by tears, followed the upturned gaze of his. Mr. West was deeply touched, and his silence was full of sympathy. No one spoke till Willie began in a quiet voice:

"Tell us more, old fellow. Who is the bridegroom, for instance?"

"Sir Samuel Grimes."

"Beauty and the Beast! Has he any recommendation besides his money?"

"I believe he is liberal—not a bad fellow on the whole."

"Ah! Has it been a long engagement?"

"I can't exactly say how long. I published their banns for the last time this morning."

"What a pity you were not at that church, Bertha. Well, West, go on. Is it to be a gay wedding?"

"Rather, I fancy. I am to have the honour of assisting; and I can't say I look forward—— Dear me, it's five o'clock," said West, starting up. "I must go, I'll come again as soon as possible. Good-bye, Mrs. Hope."

"Do, and bring us some more Beach-cliff gossip," said Willie, holding out his thin hot hand.

When their visitor had hurried away, Mrs. Hope and Bertha waited in painful suspense; they dared not flatter themselves that this calmness of Willie's could last long. But it was in just the same voice that he presently said:

"Look here, both of you—anything's

better than suspense. I feel quite jolly, I assure you. And what's more, I mean to go to the wedding."

"You! Oh, my dear, don't talk such nonsense," said Mrs. Hope. "Are you thinking of making a scene? Really, Willie, I am ashamed of you. I never heard anything so—so unmanly. Don't you think so, Bertha?"

"Willie does not mean to do anything of the kind," said Bertha quietly.

"I shall go to the wedding. She won't see me, or if she does, she won't care."

"I don't know, I rather think she will," said Mrs. Hope.

"No. It may amuse her to see the worm's last wriggle. We'll carry it off, Bertha, won't we? I feel ten times stronger already. You shall order a chair to take me to the church, we must find out what time; but first there is something else for you to do. Sit down and write to Covent Garden to order a first-rate bouquet."

"For her? Sir Samuel Grimes will give her a bouquet," said Bertha.

"I bet you it won't be such a good one as mine. They shall send it here, and it shall be left at the door with my card, the first thing on Tuesday morning. What's the flower that kills all other flowers? they may make it of that, if they like. Sit down, Bertha, and order something beautiful."

Mrs. Hope could bear no more, and went out of the room. Bertha, for her part, was not unwilling to do as her brother wished; she suspected that Dora had still a little feeling left, and thought that her cruel trifling deserved punishment. "You wouldn't like to send her a present?" she suggested in a low voice.

"No," said Willie, after a moment's hesitation; "I don't want her to be bored with any recollections of me more lasting than flowers that die."

"You have been much better to her than she deserved," said his sister.

"I have been a great fool," answered Willie. "But it doesn't matter now."

He lay very quiet for some time, while the room grew dark, and twilight crept over the grey sea. Presently he said in a low tired voice:

"Bertha, you needn't tell mother, because it would vex her, but I'm going to die. There's no chance of my getting better now."

"You are not going to die to-day," said

Bertha, and she came and stood beside him.

"No, nor to-morrow, nor the next day. But it won't be long, and I should like to be buried in the cemetery up there, where one can hear the sea. I have been a fool. Bertha, I always knew that 'Sink or Swim' was a risky affair, yet I asked for mother's money because it seemed my only chance of marrying Dora. It was not only the act of a fool, it was the act of a selfish brute. You were quite right in objecting."

"You understand it was not that I grudged you the money," murmured Bertha.

"I understand now, at any rate. And I've some bad news for you. Things have been going from bad to worse with that company. Now I am sure the last chance is gone—I know it—and I'll tell you why. If Julius Hamilton had seen any hope, he would never have let her marry old Grimes, because he is fond of her in his way. So it's all over, and I sha'n't even live to work for you and mother."

His voice failed, and Bertha, standing there in the dusk, felt as if darkness was indeed gathering over her world. She had no wish to cry or bemoan herself, however, feeling the strange influence of Willie's quietness; before the inevitable there could be nothing but resignation. She did not try to comfort or caress him, but stood looking at his pale profile against the darkening sea.

After some time she said: "Don't let us make mother wretched before the time. And you need not be anxious, I shall work for her."

"You are a brave girl; she's lucky in having you," said Willie, and they then both fell back into silence.

CHAPTER VIII.

MISS HAMILTON was married on a wild gleamy day, the sun looking out now and then between grey hurrying clouds, which were driven by a cold north-west wind. The wind whistled past the church door, and made the bride shiver in her satin and lace.

She did not look her best, people said; much too pale, and not happy. Most of her acquaintances were in the church, and before the wedding-party arrived, their chief object of interest was a young

invalid, whose chair, accompanied by two quiet-looking women, had been wheeled in and placed near the great door, where he could see from a quiet corner everything that went on.

The ceremony was soon over; the Wedding March and the bells crashed out together, and in a few minutes Sir Samuel and Lady Grimes came down to their carriage. The sick man's chair had been wheeled out of the church; there, in the cold wind, he was waiting to see the bride go away. He was sitting upright, and as she came out of the door he took his hat off. Brides generally enjoy the privilege of not seeing the spectators who throng to look at them; but perhaps this bride was neither so nervous nor so happy as to ignore everyone else. Anyhow, she looked straight at Willie, as he looked at her. Both faces, so pale before, flushed rosy red at that moment. It was scarcely more than a second; the white vision had stepped into the carriage and was gone, and the invalid fell back with a sigh, almost of relief. The last pain was over.

They took him back as quickly as possible to the little room, where on the table beside his sofa stood a splendid white bouquet. It had arrived that morning; but after all, Willie would not send it to Dora. "Why should I plague her with it?" he said.

The flowers were hardly faded a few days later, when Bertha laid some of them about the quiet face and hands of her brother, who had fallen asleep. They laid him, as he wished, in the breezy cemetery on the hill, where winds and clouds and sunshine could pass freely over him, and the great voice of the sea was never silent.

Months afterwards, when Mrs. Hope and Bertha were gone away to a hard and sad life in London, knowing themselves utterly ruined by the failure of the "Sink or Swim," and having spent their last money in a stone at Willie's head with "his name and life's brief date," he in his unconscious solitude was visited by somebody who brought him flowers, and gave him tears too, foolish tears of useless late remorse.

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